

Standards Developed for Containerized Longleaf Seedlings

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system. Landowners who agreed to plant longleaf received more points for certain practices and thus had a better chance of being accepted into the program. This year alone, over 30,000 acres have been accepted into the program.

Another big contributor to the increased popularity of the longleaf pine is the Longleaf Alliance. The Longleaf Alliance has been instrumental in providing information about seedling availability, technical information useful in improving seedling survival, historical information about the ecosystem, and has encouraged and promoted the management of the longleaf pine ecosystem. In addition to providing sound technical information about managing longleaf pine, the Alabama Forestry Commission saw the need to develop standards for containerized longleaf seedlings. The AFC has had minimum standards for

bareroot longleaf seedlings for many years. However, no written standards have been in effect for containerized seedlings. A variety of longleaf containerized seedlings are now being grown in nurseries and sold to the public. The poor survival rates on a significant number of the containerized seedlings planted last year signified the need for written standards.

Developing written standards will not necessarily improve planting success, but it will provide landowners with a guide for what to look for in a quality seedling. Proper handling of the seedlings and proper planting techniques are still vital to the overall success of the planting project.

It is hoped that these standards will help landowners and vendors who are interested in purchasing and planting longleaf to have a successful planting. 🌲

THE longleaf pine (*Pinus palustris* Miller) was specified as the state tree of Alabama by the legislature in 1997. However, it has long been a major timber species in Alabama. Longleaf pine is distributed primarily in the lower two-thirds of the state and grows best in well-drained sandy soils. Its insect and disease resistant traits, its resistance to fire damage, and the high quality products derived from the tree make it an obvious choice among forestland owners and land managers. Also, it has remained the sentimental favorite of many foresters and landowners over the decades, and poor survival rates after planting have contributed to the decline of longleaf.

In recent years longleaf's popularity has increased largely due to the high priority it has received in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). In an effort to reestablish the longleaf pine ecosystem, which provides for a unique habitat for many species of plants and wildlife, some changes were made to the CRP ranking

Standards for Containerized Longleaf Seedlings

1. Needle length must be 3" or greater and live. Completely dead, brown or yellow needles are not acceptable (some at the bottom of the seedling are ok).
2. Root collar diameter of 0.20" or greater.
3. Root system must not be cut or damaged.
4. Plugs must be 3.0" cubic inches or greater in volume.
5. Plugs must be a minimum of 3.25" deep.
6. There cannot be any contaminating substances such as weed and grass seeds and/or sprouting in the potting medium.
7. Plugs must be intact; lost potting medium exposing the root system is not acceptable. Plugs where the roots have grown down the side of the potting medium are ok; loose potting medium that easily washes or falls off during watering or handling is not acceptable.
8. Plugs must be moist.
9. Terminal bud must not be damaged.

Individual companies may request a review of their seedlings. The director of the Alabama Forestry Commission's Management Division will have final approval authority.

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